Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship  
UPDATED September 5, 2017

The Honorable Jim Costa  
2081 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Costa:

The undersigned organizations strongly oppose proposals that would politicize the charitable nonprofit and philanthropic community by repealing or weakening current federal tax law protections that prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from endorsing, opposing, or contributing to political candidates.

Nonpartisanship is a cornerstone principle that has strengthened the public’s trust of the charitable community. In exchange for enjoying tax-exempt status and the ability to receive tax-deductible contributions, 501(c)(3) organizations – charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, and foundations – agree to not engage in “any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.” That provision of law protects the integrity and independence of charitable nonprofits and foundations. It shields the entire 501(c)(3) community against the rancor of partisan politics so the charitable community can be a safe haven where individuals of all beliefs come together to solve community problems free from partisan divisions. It screens out doubts and suspicions regarding ulterior partisan motives of charitable organizations, as undoubtedly would occur if even just a few charitable organizations engaged in partisan politics. Nonpartisan credibility is critical to the ability of 501(c)(3) organizations to work with elected officials of all parties at the local, state, and federal levels to address community needs.

Charitable nonprofits, including religious congregations, are free to speak on important matters of the day and advocate on public policy issues and legislation. Private foundations, while barred from most lobbying activities, are free to engage in public debates, promote public education efforts, and fund a wide range of issue-focused activities. The relevant language in Section 501(c)(3) merely prohibits partisan campaign intervention, defined to include endorsing or opposing candidates for public office, publishing or distributing statements for or against candidates, or using tax-deductible and other resources to support partisan campaign activities.

We are united in opposing any and all efforts to weaken or repeal this longstanding protection in the federal tax code (sometimes called the Johnson Amendment) that President Eisenhower signed into law in 1954. Weakening the law by allowing leaders of individual 501(c)(3) entities to endorse candidates for public office and engage in some partisan electioneering activities would damage the integrity and effectiveness of all charitable organizations and spawn litigation as innovative partisans seek to expand gray areas in the proposed legislation. Repealing the Johnson Amendment, an approach promoted by the President and some in Congress, would damage the federal Treasury as people take tax deductions for political contributions they could then funnel through charitable nonprofits, undercut fair elections by providing a loophole to avoid campaign contribution disclosure laws, and empower politicians to exert pressure for access to foundation assets and charitable funds for their own partisan campaigns rather than for the public good.
We urge you to join us in opposing efforts to weaken and/or repeal the current law that for six decades has successfully protected the integrity and effectiveness of charitable nonprofits and foundations by keeping them apart from partisan politics.

Respectfully,

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Neighborhood Funders
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Nonprofit Alliance of Monterey County
Not Man Apart Physical Theatre
Notre Dame de Namur University
Oakland Museum of California
OneJustice
Orange County United Way
Pacific Community Ventures
Pacific Links Foundation
Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust
Pasadena Conservatory of Music
Paso Pacifico
Patricia D. and William B. Smullin Foundation
Patriots and Paws
Peninsula Family Service
Philanthropy California (a joint initiative of Northern California Grantmakers, San Diego Grantmakers, and Southern California Grantmakers)
Point Foundation
Pro Kids, The First Tee of San Diego
Rancho Santa Fe Foundation
Recovery Cafe San Jose
reDiscover Center
Regenerate California Innovation
Respite and Research for Alzheimer's Disease
Richmond Community Foundation
Rochester Institute of Technology
Sacramento LGBT Community Center
Sadlon & Associates, Inc.
Oakland
San Francisco
Los Angeles
Sunnyvale
Los Angeles
Oakland
San Francisco
Irvine
San Francisco
Watsonville
Pasadena
Ventura
Eureka
Huntington Beach
San Mateo
Los Angeles
Los Angeles
San Diego
San Jose
Los Angeles
San Jose
Venice
Clovis
San Jose
Richmond
Los Altos
Sacramento
Glendale
San Diego Advocates for Social Justice
San Diego Public Library Foundation
San Diego Youth Symphony & Conservatory
San Luis Obispo Symphony
Santa Monica Conservancy
Santa Ynez Valley Arts Assoc.
SBCC Foundation
Seva Foundation
Sierra Repertory Theatre
Silicon Valley Bicycle Exchange
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits
So CA Center for Nonprofit Management
Solar Richmond
South Asian Network
Southern California Center for Nonprofit Management
Stapleton School of the Performing Arts
Strawberry Seals, Inc.
Surrogate Gallery Projects SWEA
Swift Foundation
Teen Success, Inc.
The 5 Gyres Institute
The American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
The Christensen Fund
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
The Dibble Institute
The Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden
The Fieldstone Foundation
The Lawrence Welk Family Foundation
San Diego
San Diego
San Diego
Santa Barbara
Berkeley
San Francisco
Angels Camp
Sonora
Mountain View
Mountain View
San Jose
Los Angeles
Richard
San Jose
Artesia
Los Angeles
Buena Park
San Anselmo
San Francisco
Milpitas
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San Francisco
Palo Alto
Los Angeles
Community Letter in Support of Nonpartisanship
California

The Nicholson Family Foundation  Aptos
The River Project  Oakland
Theresa Nelson & Associates  San Francisco
Tides  Oakland
TR Brown Consulting  Livermore
TransForm  Woodland
Tri Valley Haven  Livermore
Tuleyome  Oakland
Unemployment Services Trust  San Francisco
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert  Rancho Mirage
United Way of Kern County  Bakersfield
United Ways of California  Tiburon
Unleashing Generosity / Triskeles Foundation  Palo Alto
Vegan Outreach  San Francisco
Vesper Society  Santa Barbara
Vista Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired  Costa Mesa
Wave Foundation  Los Angeles
Waves of Gratefulness  Long Beach
Weingart Foundation  Riverside
Western Methodist Justice Movement  Fullerton
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation  Long Beach
Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management
WomenShelter of Long Beach  Long Beach
Youssef and Kamel Mawardi Fund  Riverside
YWCA of North Orange County  Fullerton

National Organizations

Abila
Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education, Inc.
AdoptAClassroom.org
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
America Solidaria U.S.
American Alliance of Museums
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Association of Teachers of German
American Atheists
American Bladder Cancer Society
American Board of Venous & Lymphatic Medicine
American Brass Chamber Music Association
American Conference of Academic Deans
American Heart Association
American Historical Association
American Jewish Committee
American Medical Association Foundation
American Physiological Society
American Podiatric Medical Association, Inc.
American Red Cross
Americans for the Arts
Americans Promoting Study Abroad
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Amyloidosis Foundation
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Anti-Defamation League
Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Association for Jewish Outreach Professionals
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel
Association of Fundraising Professionals
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Nature Center Administrators
Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
Baptist Women in Ministry
Barr Foundation
BoardSource
Brady Campaign and Center to Prevent Gun Violence
Camp Fire
Campion Foundation
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Mobilizing Network
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Center for Inquiry
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Citizen Schools
CleanSlateNow
Commonwealth Fund
Council on Foundations
Council for Global Equality
Dance USA
Dementia Society, Inc.
Democracy 21
Destination & Travel Foundation
Dietel Partners, LLC
Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
Easter Seals
Ecology Project International
Engineering Conferences International
Episcopal Relief & Development
Feed the Children
Feeding America
Fidesco USA
Food & Water Watch
Ford Foundation
Free Press
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Global Integrity
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
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GuideStar
Habitat for Humanity International
Harbor Compliance
HawkWatch International
Hindu American Foundation
Histiocytosis Foundation
Horizons National
Human Science Institute
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International Essential Tremor Foundation
International Hearing Dog, Inc.
International Performing Arts for Youth
International Primate Protection League
Issue One
Jessie Ball DuPont Fund
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federations of North America
Leadership USA
League of American Orchestras
League of Women Voters
Leukemia Research Foundation
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education
Lumina Foundation
Lymphoma Foundation of America
Migraine Research Foundation
Mentors International
Morino Ventures, LLC
National 4-H Council

National Alliance of Community Economic Development
National Association of Charitable Gift Planners
National Association of Health Data Organizations
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA)
National Association of Watch and Collectors
National Association for Shoplifting Prevention
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Center for Appropriate Technology
National Center for Fire and Life Safety
National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome
National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
National Council of Behavioral Health
National Council of Churches
National Council of Nonprofits
National Council of Tribes
National Dance Education Organization
National Hartford Centers of Gerontological Nursing Excellence
National Human Services Assembly
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Organization for Albinism and Hypopigmentation
National Runaway Safeline
National Safe Place Network
National Tongan American Society
NEO Law Group
North American Bramble Growers Research Foundation
OPERA America
Partnership for America's Children
Pension Fund of the Christian Church
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement
Project Wet Foundation
Project Managers Without Borders
Public Citizen
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Secular Coalition for America
Senior Executives Association
Seva Foundation
Skillman Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Smith’s Food and Drug
Social Velocity
The Arc of the United States
The Aspen Institute
The Association of Junior Leagues
   International, Inc.
The Commonwealth Fund
The Dibble Institute
The Educational Foundation of America
The George Gund Foundation
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
The United Methodist Church – General
   Board of Church and Society
The Voter Participation Center
TIDES
Unemployment Services Trust
Union for Reform Judaism
United Philanthropy Forum
United Way Worldwide
University Professional & Continuing
   Education Association
US Lacrosse
Vasculitis Foundation
Volunteers in Medicine
Volunteers of America
Voto Latino
Wallace Global Fund
WasteWater Education
Weingart Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Words Without Borders
World Day of Prayer USA
World Neighbors, Inc.
Youth Services America
YWCA USA